United Nations A/57/PV.1

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-seventh session

1st plenary meeting
Tuesday, 10 September 2002, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jan Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Opening of the session by the President of the General Assembly

The President: I declare open the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The President: I would like to invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation, in accordance with rule 62 of the rules of procedure.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

Item 119 of the provisional agenda

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/57/390)

The President: Before turning to the items on our agenda, I should like, in keeping with the established practice, to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/57/390, which contains a letter from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly in which he informs the Assembly that 16 Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

I should like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

> "A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years."

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in document A/57/390?

It was so decided.

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Credentials of representatives to the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly

(a) Appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee

The President: Rule 28 of the rules of procedure provides that the General Assembly at the beginning of each session shall appoint, on the proposal of the President, a Credentials Committee consisting of nine members.

Accordingly, it is proposed that, for the fifty-seventh session, the Credentials Committee should

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consist of the following Member States: Argentina, Barbados, Belgium, China, Mali, Namibia, Papua New Guinea, the Russian Federation and the United States of America.

May I take it that the States I have mentioned are hereby appointed members of the Credentials Committee?

It was so decided.

Address by the President

The President: It is a great honour and privilege for me to assume the presidency of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly today. Let me thank you, members of the Assembly for the trust and confidence you have extended to my country and myself. I would like to assure you that I will do my best to perform all my functions and tasks effectively and with full understanding of the concerns of each Member State, as well as of the interests of the United Nations membership as a whole.

At the outset, let me express sincere gratitude to my esteemed predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Han Seung-soo, President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. Under his able leadership, you have all made the previous session successful in many areas. I personally highly value the fact that under his guidance an entirely new procedure of transition between General Assembly presidencies was established. The newly adopted rules for the election of the President and the General Committee several months ahead constitute an important achievement that will enable all future General Assembly Presidents to assume their responsibilities in a smoother, better organized and more efficient way.

The Czech Republic has always emphasized the indispensable role the Organization plays in maintaining international peace and security, enhancing economic, development and humanitarian cooperation, and promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Over the years, we have served the Organization in many ways, working in various governing bodies in intergovernmental processes and participating in development cooperation and in peacekeeping operations all over the world. I therefore assume the General Assembly presidency with a great sense of responsibility and commitment to contribute, in my own modest personal capacity, to further strengthening the role of the United Nations.

Allow me to share our priorities for the work of the fifty-seventh session. As we commemorate the tragic events of 11 September 2001, we must remain focused on the fight against international terrorism and uphold our international coalition. The strengthening of United Nations instruments, including the set of international treaties to combat terrorism, should be central to the efforts of the international community. In this respect, I highly commend the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, which has greatly contributed to the implementation of the historic Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). For the part of the General Assembly, we still have an important task to resolve. We lack a general convention against terrorism — including a definition of international terrorism — and I strongly urge Member States to proceed with their work in the ad hoc Working Group of the Sixth Committee on that issue. I am ready to take an active part in all United Nations efforts to combat international terrorism.

It is also crucial to continue our work in the area of conflict prevention. Recent experience suggests that certain conflicts can be prevented through preventive diplomacy, preventive deployment and preventive disarmament. The far-reaching recommendations of the Secretary-General's report on the prevention of armed conflict (A/55/985) serve as a guide to enhance the preventive capacity of the United Nations and to move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. Successful preventive strategies should include accountability and good governance, respect for human rights, promotion of social and economic development, and programmes aimed at attaining disarmament, education and gender equality.

The need for an effective strategy for conflict prevention is underlined by the number of existing conflicts troubling today's world. One of the most protracted of those conflicts is the Middle East conflict. International efforts to bring peace to the area, on both a bilateral and an international basis, have intensified in the past decade. Since its establishment, the United Nations has been actively involved in numerous efforts to resolve the conflict, most recently as one of the players in the "quartet" initiative. There is a growing hope that the "quartet" has the necessary potential to slow down the vicious spiral of violence and to bring new prospects for a peaceful settlement to the parties in the conflict. During our deliberations at the General Assembly, I would like to contribute, to the extent

possible, to the existing efforts to find a political resolution to this conflict.

Other issues of great importance that I plan to follow closely include poverty eradication, the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the role of sustainable development in the accelerating process of globalization. The Millennium Summit was a remarkable milestone in our endeavour to explore ways to achieve a more equal distribution of the benefits of globalization. We believe that the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly is the session in which the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development should be duly addressed.

The Millennium Declaration laid out the set of development goals that have been widely accepted as targets for development cooperation. In Monterrey, substantial progress was achieved in the area of financing for development, bringing a number of recommendations to national Governments, local authorities and international institutions. The Monterrey Consensus itself gave us guidance on how to change our work in the United Nations in order to achieve better coherence and efficiency. We will also have to improve cooperation among the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Assembly's Main Committees.

The fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly will face the very important and challenging task of preparing for the high-level dialogue in 2003 as a follow up to the Monterrey Consensus. Building global partnerships for development is a key to its success. During my time in office I will pay special attention to closer cooperation between the United Nations and major stakeholders, namely the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization, as well as other multilateral institutions, representatives of the private sector, and of course, civil society.

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, Governments reaffirmed their commitment to the achievement of sustainable development. After lengthy and uneasy negotiations, Governments endorsed a plan of implementation that contains at least some specific targets, timetables and ways to alleviate poverty and protect the environment. In addition, more than 220 partnerships representing $235 million in resources, were introduced at the Summit in Johannesburg to complement Government commitments.

I am aware that the World Summit did not meet all the expectations of all the people, but I am confident that the compromise reached will enable the United Nations to come up with mechanisms that would be instrumental in timely implementation of the commitments made in Johannesburg.

As President of the General Assembly, I will support an early follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development. My attention will be focused also on regional initiatives, such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

Although I am aware that there is no direct causal link between poverty and terrorism, at the same time I am convinced that extreme poverty is one of the important ingredients which, combined with others such as unresolved long-term political conflicts, could potentially produce an explosive cocktail. At the very least, this can lead to a feeling of powerlessness, frustration and anger, which can create fertile soil for fundamentalist, radical or even terrorist behaviour.

I believe, therefore, that we have to implement the millennium development goals and fight poverty, not only for moral and humanitarian reasons, but also as an integral part of the fight against terrorism and extreme intolerance of all kinds — as part of our struggle for a stable, secure and more just world.

I am convinced that, for anyone who truly understands the meaning of international solidarity — and let me stress that I have in mind ordinary human solidarity — the fight against poverty and for human dignity is a task which has to be tackled. There is no option of doing nothing or even doing less than our utmost.

Over the past two months I have had the opportunity to consult with some members on questions of United Nations reform. I have heard a clear message: we should make the work of the General Assembly more dynamic, lively and efficient. I plan to build on the achievements of my predecessors, Mr. Harri Holkeri and Mr. Han Seung-soo, and continue the work on the revitalization of the General Assembly. I intend to hold panel discussions on issues of common interest and informal consultations on items that require more information and interactive

dialogue. In that regard, I rely on the active involvement of all members.

I want to further improve the working methods of the General Assembly by streamlining its agenda. In this regard we have already achieved some modest progress. For the first time ever, in a close and effective cooperation with the Secretariat, a draft programme of work for the entire main part of the fifty-seventh session was provided to Member States several weeks before the beginning of the session. In this programme, agenda items have been entrusted, allowing for joint or consequent debate on interlinked issues.

The support of Member States for this proposal could help eliminate repetitive speeches and create better preconditions for more complex consideration of interrelated and cross-cutting issues. In that connection, I would like to inform the Assembly of my strong intention to fully utilize the time allocated for our meetings, including by starting our work punctually. In chairing the meetings I am determined to adhere to the agreed time limits of speeches, and also in this respect, I hope to gain the support and full cooperation of members.

I look forward to the outcome of the ongoing work of the Secretariat on the enhancement of its effectiveness, as part of the implementation of the road map. I am convinced that this initiative, combined with the efforts on the revitalization of the General Assembly, could result in more profound changes that would make the United Nations truly efficient.

As the Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform, I will do my utmost to facilitate discussion to bring Member States closer to an agreement. I would like to reiterate that a more representative Security Council reflecting the changed realities of today's world should be in the interest of Member States.

I would like to commend the Secretariat for the assistance provided so far to my office and me. Let me also express my hope that this kind of constructive cooperation will continue throughout the course of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

Allow me a very brief concluding reflection. We all come from different parts of the world, bringing with us diverse backgrounds, skills, knowledge and approaches. The diversity of our views and cultures makes our discussions rich and powerful, sometimes even dramatic. On the other hand, we all have a lot in common, particularly our desire to live in a peaceful and secure world where the values and principles expressed in the United Nations Charter are fully honoured. I would like to plead with all members to work during the upcoming session in a spirit of partnership and solidarity. Let open discussion, mutual understanding and tolerance as well as constructive cooperation govern our deliberations. I wish all of us a fruitful and productive session.

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

Letter dated 9 September 2002 from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences to the President of the General Assembly
(A/57/389)

The President: Members are aware that pursuant to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243, no subsidiary organ of the General Assembly should be permitted to meet at United Nations Headquarters during the main part of a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly. Authorization is thus sought for the subsidiary organs listed in the letter contained in document A/57/389 — Committee on Relations with the Host Country, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East, the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and the Committee on Conferences — on the strict understanding that meetings would have to be accommodated within available facilities and services.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to authorize those subsidiary organs of the Assembly listed in the letter of the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences to meet during the main part of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly?

It was so decided.

Presentation by the Secretary-General of his report on the work of the Organization

The President: Before turning to the next item on our agenda, I wish to bring to the attention of the Assembly a matter relating to item 10 of the provisional agenda of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, entitled "Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization".

Pursuant to paragraphs 4 and 10 of resolution 51/241 of 31 July 1997, and as at previous sessions, the Secretary-General wishes to make a brief presentation of his annual report as the first item in the morning of Thursday, 12 September, prior to the opening of the general debate.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees that, under item 10 of the provisional agenda, the Secretary-General shall make a brief presentation of his annual report as the first item on the morning of Thursday, 12 September, prior to the opening of the general debate?

It was so decided.

The President: Before proceeding to the next item on our agenda, I would like to inform members that the list of speakers for the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to consider how to support a new partnership for Africa's development, to be held on Monday, 16 September, is open.

Item 20 of the provisional agenda

Admission of new Members to the United Nations (rule 136)

Application for admission (A/56/1009)

Letter from the President of the Security Council (A/57/259)

Draft resolution (A/57/L.1)

The President: In accordance with the procedure followed in the past, I should now like to invite the General Assembly to consider the positive recommendation by the Security Council for the admission to membership in the United Nations of the Swiss Confederation.

This special procedure has been applied previously in order to give States recommended by the Security Council for membership in our Organization the opportunity, if the General Assembly acts favourably on their requests, to participate from the outset in the work of the session.

If there is no objection, we shall proceed accordingly.

It was so decided.

The President: I give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, His Excellency Mr. Dominique de Villepin, to introduce draft resolution A/57/L.1.

Mr. De Villepin (France) (*spoke in French*): In accordance with Article 4 of the Charter, and following the adoption of Security Council resolution 1426 (2002) of 24 July 2002, which recommends to the General Assembly that the Swiss Confederation be admitted to membership in the United Nations, it is my honour, on behalf of the five friendly countries neighbouring it, to recommend to the Assembly the adoption of the draft resolution to admit Switzerland to membership of the United Nations.

We warmly welcome the admission of Switzerland to the United Nations. We do so, of course, because of the bonds that unite our two countries. But we do so also, and in particular, because Switzerland's membership will strengthen the United Nations and the values on which the Organization must build the future.

Geography has made Switzerland and France neighbours; history has made us allies and friends. In 1430, my country opened a diplomatic mission in Switzerland. While many conflicts have caused much bloodshed in Europe throughout the centuries, our countries have enjoyed peaceful relations since 1515.

On a number of occasions during crucial times in our history, Switzerland opened its doors to us. That tradition of Switzerland as a land of exile goes back a long way. How could we forget that in the seventeenth century it gave refuge to many French people fleeing religious persecution? Even then, when intransigence was often the rule and being different was often punished by death, Switzerland was a model of openness, tolerance and peace.

The bonds that unite us today are strong, close and characterized by unfailing trust. Our dialogue is an ongoing one. Our two countries are also major actors in the French-speaking community. But Switzerland's

outreach extends to the whole world. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it hosted the very first efforts to create a responsible, fraternal international community. Geneva became the other main headquarters of the United Nations and home to some 15 specialized agencies.

Switzerland will now be able to bring to the United Nations all of the qualities that we identify with it. As a founding Member of the United Nations, and because we are committed to strengthening the Organization, France is profoundly pleased by this. Switzerland's standards and practices go right to the heart of the values that unite us.

Switzerland is the only State to have joined the United Nations following a referendum. Its system of direct democracy, which was worked out over the centuries through the patient work of some of the greatest jurists, will strengthen the democratic premise of our Organization.

Its multicultural character and its multilingualism will make a crucial contribution to the dialogue among civilizations that is now so essential the community of States, particularly since, in addition to its wealth of cultural resources, Switzerland has traditionally been a land of refuge for great artists, including Charlie Chaplin, Nabokov and Balthus.

The role played by Switzerland in development, international law and humanitarian issues is crucial. Who could forget that the founder of the Red Cross, Henri Dunant, was Swiss? The historic decision taken by the Swiss Confederation will now enable it, with respect for its neutrality, to enjoy new opportunities for action and influence. It will now be able to bring its full potential to bear in carrying out the tasks entrusted to it by the United Nations: ensuring peace, security and the prosperity of humankind.

France is therefore particularly happy and proud to stand beside Switzerland at this crucial time in its history.

The President: Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have joined the sponsors of A/57/L.1: the Bahamas, Brunei Darussalam, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Grenada, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Suriname.

May I take it that the General Assembly accepts the recommendation of the Security Council and adopts the draft resolution by acclamation?

Draft resolution A/57/L.1 was adopted (resolution 57/1).

The President: I therefore declare the Swiss Confederation admitted to membership in the United Nations.

I request the Chief of Protocol to escort the delegation of the Swiss Confederation to its place in the General Assembly Hall.

The delegation of the Swiss Confederation was escorted to its place in the General Assembly Hall.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Côte d'Ivoire, His Excellency Mr. Djessan Philippe Djangone-Bi, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Djangone-Bi (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I should like to say that it is an honour and a pleasure to represent the Group of African States before the Assembly on the occasion of the admission of the Swiss Confederation to the United Nations as a full-fledged Member State, and to welcome the presence of the Swiss delegation, led by His Excellency Mr. Kaspar Villiger, President of the Swiss Confederation. I should also like to convey the warmest congratulations of the African Group to the Government and the people of Switzerland on their historic decision to give that important country of the international community the place that it deserves within the United Nations.

Finally, the African States, which all enjoy excellent relations with Switzerland, would like to tell the Swiss delegation, through me, how pleased they are to see it occupy at last the place that should have belonged to it long ago. Africans are aware of the role that Switzerland has played for many years in the defence and promotion of the ideals of the United Nations. Has it not, for decades, been the seat of important bodies and agencies of the Organization and of other international bodies that work for the promotion of peace, development and understanding among the peoples of the world?

In the light of the foregoing, it was vital for us Africans that such a country become a full-fledged

member of the United Nations family at the beginning of the twenty-first century, a time when the Organization needs fresh inspiration to rise to the numerous challenges that face it.

Switzerland should know that it can count on the readiness and the cooperation of the African Group of the United Nations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, His Excellency Mr. M. Javad Zarif, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asian States.

Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran): It is a great honour and a privilege for me, acting in my capacity as the Chairman of the Asian Group, to congratulate the Swiss Confederation on its admission today to membership of the United Nations. We are profoundly glad to welcome to this Hall the Swiss delegation, whose presence here has further enhanced the universality of the Organization. We welcome Switzerland as a new member of the United Nations family. There have always been very close links between the United Nations and Switzerland, which has — among many other things, and among its many contributions to the work of the Organization — graciously offered its hospitality to the European Headquarters of the United Nations as well as to numerous other international organizations.

As a democratic and multicultural society, Switzerland represents the true spirit of the United Nations and a best model for dialogue among civilizations. It attaches great importance to the promotion of international law, and it has a history of offering its good offices and of supporting international peace efforts, contributing military observers and civilian personnel to United Nations peacekeeping operations. Switzerland is renowned for its long humanitarian tradition, and it has been a significant contributor to the efforts of the United Nations in the fields of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.

We are convinced that Switzerland's membership of the United Nations is important not only for Switzerland itself, but also for the Organization's membership as a whole. Active and full participation by Switzerland in the activities of the United Nations will certainly enable us to make more effective use of the Organization's potential to promote the establishment of peace and security and to pursue the goals and objectives enshrined in the Charter.

I would like to express our best wishes to the Swiss Confederation on this significant event and to wish the Government and the people of Switzerland continued peace and prosperity. The States Member of the Asian Group look forward to working closely with Switzerland in all spheres of the activities of the United Nations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine, His Excellency Mr. Valery Kuchinsky, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine): On behalf of the Group of Eastern European States and my own country, Ukraine, I have the honour and great pleasure to congratulate the Swiss Confederation on its admission to membership of the United Nations. Our Organization is meant to be universal. Today, the principle of universality has moved one step closer towards its full realization. The admission of Switzerland to the family of nations also enhances the legitimacy and effectiveness of the United Nations.

Despite the fact that Switzerland officially joins the United Nations only today, we have always considered it to be a great partner deeply involved in United Nations activities. I refer here not only to its participation in numerous United Nations bodies, special agencies and various programmes of the Organization; everyone knows Geneva as one of the major United Nations centres of the world, a family hearth for a number of international agencies and organizations. For my country, Switzerland has always served as a bright example of a tolerant, peaceful and multicultural society built on democratic values. We are confident that its membership in the United Nations will be of benefit to the people of Switzerland, who made their historic choice in a March referendum. It will be of benefit to our Organization and to the peoples of the world.

Let me warmly welcome the Swiss Confederation, congratulate the Group of Western European and Other States — which has gained such a good player for its team — and wish our new Member every success in its future United Nations endeavours.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Suriname to speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mrs. Loemban Tobing-Klein (Suriname): What a privilege it is for me to welcome the people and nation of the Swiss Confederation to the United Nations on behalf of the 34 States members of the Latin American and Caribbean Group.

To be admitted to the family of nations in the midst of the developments in today's world is of extreme importance; given the awareness and convictions of all partners in this body that we still have a long way to go to realize the most noble goals and objectives of the United Nations regarding human rights, the dignity of our peoples, tolerance, social and economic progress, international peace and security, sustainable human development and, especially, the outcomes of the most recent major conferences in Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg, which are in conformity with the very essential millennium development goals and have given us tools on the basis of which alone we, the States Members of the United Nations, shall be able to make the necessary difference in the lives of our peoples.

The newly admitted nation of the Swiss Confederation is very well known, inter alia, because of its important and essential role in the protection and promotion of human rights and the promotion and strengthening of humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles through, amongst others, the widely known and respected International Committee of the Red Cross. We may therefore expect an essential contribution from our new Member regarding the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and the millennium development goals and towards the fulfilment of our national and international responsibilities and duties.

The admission of the new Member State has therefore to be considered a great, valuable and challenging addition to our work in the United Nations. All the members of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States are ready to cooperate with the new Member State constructively and in the best possible way.

Furthermore, allow me, on behalf of all the members of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, to welcome most heartily our new, respected Member, the Swiss Confederation, as the 190th State Member of our Organization because of its well-known democratic, neutral, multicultural and multilingual nature. Let me also, on behalf of our Group, congratulate the people, Government and delegation of Switzerland at this special moment.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal to speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States.

Mr. Santa Clara Gomes (Portugal): I have the honour to address the General Assembly on this historic day in my capacity as Chairman of the Group of Western European and Other States upon the admission of Switzerland to the United Nations. It is a very great pleasure to welcome a member of our regional group, and also a fellow European country, into the United Nations membership.

On 3 March 2002, the Swiss people decided to take a step forward to build on its already strong history of 54 years as an observer and host to some of the most important institutions of the United Nations. The presence here today of the President, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and several prominent members of Parliament reaffirms the strong commitment and importance given to the United Nations by Switzerland and its desire to remain a mainstay of this Organization.

The United Nations is a unique Organization in which the sovereignty of its Member States, the peaceful settlement of disputes and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are enshrined. These principles lie also at the heart of the Swiss Confederation. We can rest assured that Switzerland will continue to participate actively in negotiations for the improvement of our societies and the human condition at large, as it has done for so many years. I am sure that its new status will add vigour to its already important role within the context of our work here at the United Nations.

We, the members of the Group of Western European and other States, look forward to a continued and closer working relationship with our Swiss friends and colleagues, who are staunch defenders of the ideas and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. As the Swiss flag is raised this afternoon before the Assembly, the world will witness the strengthening of the United Nations.

The President: I call on the representative of the United States, His Excellency Mr. John Negroponte, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Mr. Negroponte (United States of America): Let me take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the leadership of this great body, and to pledge to you the commitment and cooperation of my delegation in making your presidency of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly a real success.

It is a great honour to welcome Switzerland as the newest Member of the United Nations. Switzerland joins the United Nations as a modern democracy and as a European State with a record of active participation in regional forums dedicated to peace, security, democracy and human rights. Switzerland has shown its commitment to multilateral cooperation through its role in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Partnership for Peace and the Euro-Atlantic Council. It has also deepened its relationship with the European Union and the Council of Europe.

The decision of the Swiss people to join the United Nations is testimony to their confidence in their nation and in its ability to contribute to the wider world. Switzerland's deepening involvement in Europe and its role in peacekeeping in the Balkans and in Sudan, as well as the invaluable work of the International Committee of the Red Cross, all highlight the country's unique contributions to making the world a safer and better place. So we warmly welcome Switzerland to this meeting house of nations with every confidence that those contributions will continue.

The President: It is a great pleasure for me, on this historic occasion, to welcome, on behalf of the General Assembly, the Swiss Confederation as a new Member of the United Nations. The admission of the Swiss Confederation into the family of nations is of great significance, as it sanctions the universality of the United Nations and thus enhances its legitimacy and effectiveness.

There have been close relations and good cooperation between the Swiss Confederation and the United Nations. As a country with a long and deeply rooted tradition of democracy, the Swiss Confederation makes a great contribution to the development of international cooperation in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations. Let me remind members at this historic moment that it was the Swiss Confederation that was the host country of the League of Nations after the First World War. Moreover, it is the Swiss Confederation that is the host country of the human rights section of the United Nations, especially the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

In our mind, Geneva is connected also to the International Committee of the Red Cross as one of the bodies that targets for improvement the conditions of people in difficulty during armed conflicts, as well as during natural or social disasters. Geneva is also well known as the birthplace of many international humanitarian conventions. However, I firmly believe that the decision of the Swiss Confederation to become a Member of the United Nations reflects the will and the aspiration of the Government and the people of the Swiss Confederation to further enhance cooperation with other Member States within the intergovernmental processes of the United Nations.

I congratulate the Swiss Confederation, and I congratulate the United Nations on the admission of its 190th Member State. I am confident that this newly admitted Member State will contribute to the efforts of the General Assembly and of the United Nations in addressing the issues in international relations that lie ahead.

Address by Mr. Kaspar Villiger, President of the Swiss Confederation

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Swiss Confederation.

Mr. Kaspar Villiger, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Swiss Confederation, His Excellency Mr. Kaspar Villiger, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Villiger (*spoke in French*): On 3 March 2002, the Swiss people decided by popular vote to join the United Nations. Today the General Assembly has accepted our application for membership. First, I am proud that the Assembly has admitted Switzerland to such an important organization. I am also proud of the fact that I can

affirm, on behalf of the Swiss people, our desire to join the United Nations. This day means a great deal to Switzerland. Because our country brings together four cultures and four national languages — German, French, Italian and Rhaeto-Romansh — I will take the liberty of addressing the Assembly in three of those languages.

First, I wish to thank all the members of the General Assembly for welcoming the Swiss Confederation to the United Nations. My thanks also go particularly to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, as well as to our neighbouring countries and to all the States that submitted or sponsored the draft resolution on our membership. I also thank the representatives of the regional groups and the host country for their kind words. Finally, the Secretary-General deserves our recognition and heartfelt thanks for his tireless efforts.

The United Nations is needed now more than ever. The persistence of global differences in degrees of wealth are not acceptable. Peace remains merely a dream in too many regions of the world. Too many conflicts are addressed through violence, instead of through legal means. All these factors force millions to flee their countries. Terrorism has become a global threat. The ecological balance of much of the planet is in jeopardy.

The world's fate depends on how we respond to those problems. Those problems are the responsibility of us all. A single country, no matter how large, does not have the capacity to resolve them. It is in the interest of us all that a universal organization should take up these challenges, and that organization can only be the United Nations. That is why the United Nations is so important for humanity. We were aware of that before we became a Member. That is why for many years we have played an active role in United Nations institutions. The Swiss people have always supported that participation. A longstanding partnership has arisen from that, while, as an Observer State, we have already practised the good-neighbourliness that is called for in the Charter.

However, we struggled with the question of full United Nations membership. Many of my fellow citizens were torn. On the one hand, justice, peace and solidarity are defining values both for our own democracy and for the United Nations. The preambles to the United Nations Charter and to the Swiss Constitution express a commitment to these values. Our foreign policy aims correspond to the aims of the United Nations. We have always been proud and grateful for the fact that Geneva is a seat of the United Nations. We have always known the importance of international law, particularly for a small State with few instruments of power. And we know that the United Nations ultimately represents the indispensable means by which to attempt to contain power through law. All of these facts were in favour of membership.

But many Swiss had doubts. They wondered whether the United Nations was truly in a position to achieve its noble aims. For many, the right of veto of the Security Council permanent members was not compatible with their understanding of democracy. They also feared that membership of the United Nations could prejudice the neutrality that is deeply rooted in our people.

(*spoke in German; English text furnished by the delegation*)

Switzerland is a country brought together by a common will, but it does not possess the unifying force of a common culture or language. National cohesion is, therefore, not to be taken for granted. Its central element is our system of direct democracy and the right of the people to decide all important political issues at the ballot box. It was therefore self-evident that only the people could take the decision on United Nations membership. Following an intensive and controversial debate within Switzerland, the people and the cantons voted in favour of membership. The Swiss people support the aims and efforts of the United Nations. Our representatives in the Organization will work constructively, but always in accordance with the wishes of the Swiss people.

In our application for membership of the United Nations, we made reference to Switzerland's neutrality. It is in its basic precept a rejection of war and violence as a means of resolving conflict. It has been a maxim of our foreign policy for centuries. At the same time, it has always served as an instrument of national cohesion. Our country of four cultures would quite possibly have disintegrated in periods of great European conflict had it not been for our neutrality. For all of these reasons, neutrality is of great importance to our people.

However, our neutrality is not self-serving. It does not close its eyes when confronted with injustice

and poverty. It does not prevent us from raising our voice when injustice must be called by its name. Our neutrality is combined with solidarity, which is equally ingrained in our people. Switzerland will not participate in any peace enforcement operations, but it will be ready to help in peacekeeping or humanitarian tasks.

(*spoke in French*)

On this, the eve of the first anniversary of the abhorrent terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, I would like to reaffirm that there has never been and never will be neutrality where terrorism and criminal acts are concerned. Consequently, Switzerland is actively involved in the fight against terrorism.

(*spoke in Italian; English text furnished by the delegation*)

Our work within the United Nations will be guided by our own central values: peace, democracy, dignity, neutrality and solidarity. We will do all we can for the protection of human rights and the dignity of humankind, even in hostile situations. We are committed to good governance, protection of the environment, sustainable development and conditions conducive to an open world economy. These are also the values and interests of the United Nations.

(*spoke in French*)

Switzerland is a small country, but it gains strength from its centuries of independence and from its self-confidence. It will always make its voice heard, even when this could cause discomfort. But when it does so, it will always be in the interests of the values that I have mentioned. In all modesty, however, Switzerland is also aware of its limitations. If we are successful in making a contribution that advances the aims of the United Nations, if we are able to join in making a contribution to the building of a better world, then membership in the United Nations will have been worth it for us, too.

It is a pleasure and an honour for me to declare that Switzerland is ready to take an active part in the work of the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Swiss Confederation for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Kaspar Villiger, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President: I would like to remind members that the flag of Switzerland will be raised at a ceremony that will take place in front of the delegates' entrance immediately following the adjournment of this meeting.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.